

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USDEL FRANCE

CINCPAC

UNCLAS STATE 057289

E. O. 11652

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: MARCH 28 INDOCHINA PRESS SUMMARY

1. ALL PAPERS FEATURE BEGINNING OF FINAL POW RELEASE, INCLUDING 9 FROM LAOS, AND DEPARTURE OF FIRST ELEMENTS OF REMAINING US TROOPS. 825 ATTACHED TO US DEL JMC DUE OUT SATURDAY.

2. HOPE DWINDLING FOR MORE POWS IN LAOS, AND REPORTS OF 100-200 STILL IN PL HANDS DEEMED " HIGHLY UNREALISTIC." ONE OFFICIAL SAYS 20-30 MIGHT BE REASONABLE FIGURE, BUT EVEN THAT IS OPTIMISTIC (NYDN). DOD MIA HEAD GEN. OGAN SAYS (STERBA, NYT) DRV READY FACILITATE US SEARCH FOR MIA AND UNRECOVERED BODIES. 1330 LISTED MIA IN INDOCHINA. NHAN DAN EDITOR SAYS THERE NO OTHERS HELD IN NVN. OGAN SAYS US PERSONNEL FROM NAKONG PHANOM RECOVERY CENTER WILL WORK WITH ICRC REPS AND INDOCHINA GOVERNMENTS TO COMB
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BATTLEFIELD AND MORE THAN 1000 SITES WHERE US AIRMEN CRASHED. SOUVANNA TELLS POST'S LIPPMAN SEARCH CANNOT

BEGIN UNTIL NEW GOVERNMENT FORMED. SAYS HE " KNOUS NOTHING" ABOUT FATE OF ANY US PRISONERS OTHER THAN 9 RELEASED YESTERDAY, BUT BELIEVES " PERHAPS WE WILL KNOW MORE" LATER (WP).

3. CANADA TO STAY ON ICCS FOR ANOTHER 60 DAYS, SHARP SAYING " OUR EXPERIENCE BOTH PAST AND PRESENT DOES NOT

JUSTIFY MOVING INTO ACCEPTANCE OF OPEN- ENDED OR UNCONDITIONAL PARTICIPATION." HE WARNS GOC WILL WITHDRAW UNLESS THERE SOME " SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT" TOWARD POL SETTLEMENT. SUBSTANTIAL DETERIORATION IN MILITARY SITUATION WOULD ALSO CAUSE WITHDRAWAL (WP, NYT, SUN, CHITRIB).

4. GVN CASUALTIES (20,000) HIGHER DURING POST- CEASEFIRE 60 PERIOD THAN DURING SAME PERIOD YEAR AGO. US ARMY' S DEPARTING CHIEF MEKONG DELTA MILITARY ADVISER TO ARVN TELLS CHITRIB' S KIRK ARVN " CAN HOLD THEIR OWN" AGAINST PERSISTENT ENEMY THREATS, BUT CONCEDES GROUND COMBAT WILL CONTINUE UNLESS COMMUNISTS GET WORD TO STOP. WHILE ASSERTING US GROUND ROLE NO LONGER NEEDED, HE NOTES US AIR POWER IS CLOSE BY AND CAN BE USED " IF THINGS REALLY GET NASTY."

5. AFRTS SAIGON STATION TO KEEP UP ENGLISH- LANGUAGE NEWS PROGRAMS AND MUSIC DAO AUSPICES AT BUNKER' S REQUEST (CSM).

6. 5 SHIPS ENTER HAIPHONG HARBOR AT OWN RISK DESPITE WARNINGS FROM US NAVY. MINE CLEARERS BEGIN TRAINING NVN PERSONNEL HOW TO CLEAR MINES FROM INLAND WATERWAY (WP).

7. POST' S MARDER REPORTS FULBRIGHT DEMANDS ADMIN EXPLAIN WHAT US FORCES DOING IN CAMBODIA OR FACE PUBLIC HEARING. DEP. ASST. SEC. SULLIVAN REPORTEDLY TELLS OFF- THE- RECORD LUNCHEON ON HILL THAT DOS LAWYERS WORKING ON JUSTIFICATION FOR US BOMBING BUT " FOR NOW, I' D JUST SAY JUSTIFICATION IS THE RE- ELECTION OF UNCLASSIFIED

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PRESIDENT NIXON." MARDER SAYS " MANY OFFICIALS PRIVATELY BELIEVE THIS ONLY SEMI- FACETIOUS RESPONSE ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE ADMINISTRATION' S POSITION." NYDN' S STAN CARTER REPORTS CONGRESSIONAL SOURCE WHO PASSED ON REMARK SAID HE WAS BREAKING OFF- THE- RECORD RULES BECAUSE HE WAS AFFRONTED BY STATEMENT, WHICH HE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT ELECTION ALONE GAVE ADMINISTRATION MANDATE TO DO WHATEVER IT WISHED. DOS OFFICIALS DECLARED THAT SULLIVAN' S REMARKS HAD BEEN DISTORTED

AND TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT. SAID HE HAD EN DISTORTED THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN ELECTED TO OFFICE, AND LET IT GO AT THAT." ZIEGLER STRESSES US ACTING IN RESPONSE KHMER GOVERNMENT REQUEST BUT DECLINES CITE CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY FOR BOMBING. US OFFICIALS CONCEDE KHMER SITUATION DETERIORATING (WP). NYT' S FINNEY IN ESSENTIALLY SAME COVERAGE PREDICTS HILL OUTCRY IF BOMBING CONTINUES AFTER FINAL WITHDRAWAL US TROOPS FROM INDOCHINA THIS

WEEK (NYT).

8. AGNEW IN INTERVIEW WITH CSM SAYS HE NOT ENCOURAGED BY KHMER SITUATION, LON NOL' S HEALTH AND LACK OF PRAGMATISM IN APPROACH TO COUNTRY' S PROBLEMS; HE NOT SANGUINE ABOUT LAOS SITUATION, CALLING LAOS " GEOGRAPHIC IMPOSSIBILITY," ALTHOUGH HE IMPRESSED WITH SOUVANNA AS " TALENTED AND MODERATE POLITICIAN"; HE BELIEVES GVN STRONGER AND MORE STABLE THAN EVER BEFORE; KING PHUMIBOL A STABILIZING FACTOR IN THAILAND, ALTHOUGH THAIS ARE UNEASY ABOUT VN C- F; LEE KUAN YEW HAS DONE " MAGNIFICENT JOB," AND SUHARTO HAS DONE " EXTREMELY WELL" (CSM).

9. AT 2 RECEPTIONS, CHOU EXPRESSES SATISFACTION THAT U. S. POW ISSUE IN INDOCHINA HAS BEEN SETTLED AND AMERICAN FORCES WILL LEAVE VN BY THURSDAY. HOWEVER, HE DEPLORES " HUE AND CRY" WHICH HE SAYS HAD BEEN RAISED OVER FEWER THAN 600 U. S. POWS, WHEN MORE THAN 80,000 PAKISTANI POWS HELD IN INDIA IGNORED AND NEGLECTED (REUTER).

10. CHOU ADDS THAT DESPITE VN AGREEMENT, " OUR VIETNAMESE FRIENDS SAY WE MUST STILL BE VIGILANT." UNCLASSIFIED

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ASKED ABOUT INDOCHINA' S FUTURE, SAYS THAT ON " MORE COMPLEX" CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, " IT IS FOR PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA."

11. GLOBE' S CROCKER SNOW (MAR. 27) COVERS THEIU SPEECH IN CAN THO ON FARMERS DAY, MARKING ANNIVERSARY OF LAND REFORM PROGRAM. CABINET MINISTERS AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS PRESENT. THIEU ANNOUNCED " VAGUELY DEFINED" FIVE- YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, SAYING HIS PLANNING WOULD REQUIRE FINANCIAL AID, " ESPECIALLY FROM THE US." THIEU CHOSE NOT TO MENTION CONTINUING FIGHTING IN COUNTRYSIDE, BUT SAID " INVESTMENT IN THE PROSPERITY OF SVN ALSO CONSTITUTES AN INVESTMENT IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD; A NECESSARY CONDITION IS THE COMMUNISTS' GOODWILL FOR PEACE". THIEU SPOKE OF HIS DESIRE TO SHIFT EMPHASIS

OF GOVERNMENT MACHINERY TO VILLAGE AND HAMLET LEVEL
IN ORDER IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND " AVOID CORRUPTION."
SNOW COMMENTS THAT CAN THO EVENT TOOK ON APPEARANCE
OF A JAPANESE TRADE FAIR. JAPANESE FARM EQUIPMENT
OUTNUMBERED AND OUTSHONE THAT OF ONLY TWO US FARM
PRODUCTS COMPANIES REPRESENTED.

12. THE NATION (MAR. 26) EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER FATE

OF NON- COMMUNIST BUT ANTI- GOVERNMENT PRISONERS HELD
BY SAIGON. EVEN IF PARIS AGREEMENT DOES NOT SPELL
IT OUT, WE HAVE UNDENIABLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE
INHABITANTS OF POLITICAL NO- MAN' S LAND. THIEU WILL
YIELD TO AMERICAN PRESSURE WHEN APPLIED WITH
SUFFICIENT FORCE. SAN CLEMENTE CONFERENCE SCHEDULED
FOR APRIL IS CRUCIAL IN THIS RESPECT. INVOLVES US
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND IF PRESIDENT DOES NOT LAY
DOWN LAW, ALREADY PRECARIOUS PARIS ACCORDS MAY FALL
APART ENTIRELY.

13. CROSBY NOYES (S- N, MAR. 27) ATTACKS DEBRIS AND
MENRAS HORROR STORIES ABOUT PRISON LIFE IN SVN AS
" WHOLLY UNVERIFIABLE AND SUSPECT". EXCORIATES REPORTERS
AND COMMENTATORS FOR AVID ACCEPTANCE OF TALES ON BASIS
OF NOTHING MORE THAN EARNESTNESS OF DEBRIS' AND
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MENRAS' DEMEANOR.

14. STAR- NEWS (MAR. 27), NOTING THIEU' S SCHEDULED VISIT
TO US, EXPRESSES HOPE THAT HIS GOOD WILL MAY BE
RECIPROCATED. THIEU' S MISSION IS NOT EASY SINCE HIS
MAJOR PURPOSE IS TO SEEK ASSURANCES OF CONTINUING
US AID IN FACE OF SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION FROM CONGRESS
AND PUBLIC. THIEU' S MEETINGS WITH KEY MEMBERS OF
CONGRESS PROMISE TO BE " SOMEWHAT STICKY." ALSO,
SOME NOT PREPARED ACCEPT HIS EXPECTED EXPRESSIONS OF
THANKS FOR SUPPORT US HAS GIVEN SVN. MUCH OF
HOSTILITY TOWARD WAR IN THIS COUNTRY HAS FOCUSED ON
HIS PERSON. THUS, AS EXERCISE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
THIEU' S VISIT INVOLVES ELEMENT OF HAZARD.

15. NYDN OBSERVES THAT RIGHT UP TO END, COMMUNISTS
TRIED TO CHISEL ON AGREED TERMS AND PRIVATE UNDERSTAND-
INGS BUT GAVE UP ON ATTEMPT TO HANG ON TO NINE AMERICANS
HELD IN LAOS WHEN PRESIDENT ONCE MORE EXHIBITED
FIRMNESS OF PURPOSE. CONTINUED NO- NONSENSE STAND
SHOULD ALSO INSURE FULL COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER TRUCE
OBLIGATIONS, INCLUDING ABOVE ALL THEIR COOPERATION
IN ACCOUNTING FOR MIAS.

16. WP REVIEWS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND REMAINING UNCERTAINTIES IN INDOCHINA AFTER FIRST 60 DAYS. WHAT MATTERS NOW IS FOR US TO DEMONSTRATE STEADY NERVES. SOME AMERICANS MAY FEAR PRESIDENT IS DOING TOO MUCH FOR THIEU BY RECEIVING HIM IN THE US, OR BY EXPANDING CERTAIN SECTORS OF US "CIVILIAN" PRESENCE IN SVN. OTHERS FEAR PRESIDENT IS DOING TOO LITTLE TO ENSURE "PEACE THAT WILL LAST." DEGREE OF US DISENGAGEMENT SO FAR ACCOMPLISHED AMOUNTS TO MARKED AND MERCIFUL

IMPROVEMENT ON WHAT BOTH HAD BEFORE.

17. JAMES RESTON TAKES ISSUE WITH GOLDWATER ON PRESIDENT'S WAR POWERS. AGREES THAT HE HAS PRIMARY POWERS OVER CONDUCT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE, BUT IT IS NOT POWER "INDEPENDENT" OF CONGRESS IN CASE OF ORDERING MILITARY ACTION TO ENFORCE SETTLEMENTS. ODD THAT PRESIDENT SHOULD NOT EXPLAIN WHAT B-52 BOMBERS UNCLASSIFIED

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ARE DOING IN CAMBODIA, AND WHY, AND ON WHAT AUTHORITY. NOTES ALSO THAT NO WH STATEMENT HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING ON PRESIDENT'S RIGHT OF REINTERVENTION IN VN TO ENFORCE SETTLEMENT AFTER POWS AND TROOPS ARE HOME. ODDLY ENOUGH, CONGRESS HAS NOT YET REQUESTED OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF WHAT PRESIDENT'S POLICY ACTUALLY IS.

18. SUN'S KEATS OBSERVES THAT FOR AT LEAST TWO WEEKS, WH AND DOS SPOKESMAN HAVE REFUSED TO ANSWER QUERIES ABOUT PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY TO CONTINUE CAMBODIA BOMBING. CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS GIRDING FOR ANOTHER STAGE OF THEIR BATTLE AGAINST EXECUTIVE ASSERTION OF WAR POWERS WITHOUT APPROVAL BY CONGRESS, ARGUING THAT WITHOUT US LIVES TO PROTECT, NIXON CANNOT LEGALLY WAGE WAR. LEGAL ARGUMENT BEING DRAFTED BY DOS IS EXPECTED TO REST HEAVILY ON FORMERLY INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN FIGHTING IN CAMBODIA AND VN WAR. BECAUSE NVN TROOPS ENTERED CAMBODIA AS PART OF WAR IN SVN, LEGAL ARGUMENT MAINTAINS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS POWER TO CONTINUE AIR STRIKES UNTIL NVN FORCES WITHDRAW AND FIGHTING IN SOUTH ENDS. ARGUMENT ALSO ASSERTS PRESIDENT'S INHERENT POWERS IN HIS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. ROGERS

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